



20 April 2006



SAFETY ALERT

Fatal Traffic Accidents

1. Within the last month, we have experienced two traffic accidents that resulted in the death of two Korean nationals. The first accident involved an invited contractor operating a private motor vehicle (PMV) that collided with a Korean National on a motorcycle. The second accident involved a USFK military member operating a PMV that struck a pedestrian in the roadway in the early morning hours. These accidents concern me greatly and we all must make every reasonable effort to prevent similar tragedies.

2. These accidents are still under investigation; however it is important that we review safe driving procedures now and reemphasize safety lessons learned from similar tragedies in the past.

- Driving in Korea can be extremely hazardous. Challenges include congested highways, aggressive driving, speeding, narrow roadways, reduced visibility, pedestrians, and cultural driving practices. To ensure we set conditions for success, it is important for each of us to understand the unique driving challenges in Korea and drive very defensively.

- Speed limits are based on risks identified by authorities responsible for roads. These limits are lower in certain areas because of risks that are often not immediately obvious to drivers. Vehicle operators must operate within posted speed limits and adjust speed based on environment and road conditions.

- On every road in Korea, you can expect to find pedestrians. Traditionally, many pedestrians have felt they have as much right to use of the roads as vehicular traffic, and therefore they may expect vehicles to yield to them. This behavior creates a real hazard for drivers. It is essential to reduce speeds and be very alert when driving near pedestrian walks or recreation areas, especially where children may be present. Many Korean children have the preconceived notion that by raising their arms a vehicle will stop to allow them to cross the street.

- To reduce risks during periods of low visibility drivers must reduce their speed and not out-drive their headlights. Keep your vehicle equipment functional, windshields and headlights clean, and do not be afraid to pull over with your hazard lights on if your visibility becomes too jeopardized. It is not only your life, but the lives of other people on the road that are at risk. USFK Pam 385-2 and USFK Pam 385-3 provide more information on driving safety.

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- Our *Under the Oak Tree* counseling approaches are just as valid for family members as they are for service members. Sponsors should consider adopting a similar risk-identification and management program for their families.

3. Commanders and leaders should ensure that everyone is aware of and complies with SOFA and Korean traffic laws. Any accident has the potential to impact on our own lives and the lives of others tragically. Additionally, while operating motor vehicles, our conduct can have a strategic impact on our relationship with our Korean ally.

4. Whether you are a Service Member, civilian employee, invited contractor, or family member, each of you is an important part of this great team. We must all take every precaution to assure our personal and collective safety, and in doing so we will also add strength to the Alliance. We need every one of you alive and well as we continue to execute our mission in this great land with excellence.

We go together!



B. B. BELL
General, US Army
Commander

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